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Legislative Testimony

SB 993 AN ACT CONCERNING DENTAL ASSISTANTS AND EXPANDED FUNCTION DENTAL AUXILIARY

Margaret Drozdowski Maule, DMD, MBA

Good morning Members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Dr. Maggie Drozdowski Maule, and I am a general dentist practicing in the state of Connecticut since my graduation from the University of Connecticut in 1998 and currently the Chief Dental Officer of the Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC). Last year, CHC provided oral health care to 30,000 patients in our state. We also support the efforts of others to create access to dentistry, such as Give Kids a Smile Day and the Connecticut Mission of Mercy. The vast majority of our patients are uninsured, underinsured, or publicly insured. Many live with multiple chronic illnesses, and most have incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level.

I am here today on behalf of the Community Health Center, to testify about the importance of making quality dental care accessible to all of the people of Connecticut, and to offer CHC's support for the innovations proposed under this Bill. I also applaud the General Assembly for the efforts made thus far toward removing the barriers to care for the underserved. While there have been important improvements in dental care in Connecticut over the past decade, including the fee increase, there still remains much to be done.

Senate Bill 993 calls for Connecticut to join numerous states and federal institutions that have the increased scope of practice of a dental assistant. The expanded function dental assistant is a tested path to increasing the productivity of a dental practice by creating a member of the staff with specific duties that today only a dentist can perform. With this additional staff member to help support the team, more patients are able to access much needed dental care without sacrificing safety or quality. Although not included in this bill, additional innovations in dental workforce including the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner and the Dental Therapist have been shown as viable option to increase access for underserved patients and should be considered in CT.



Serving underserved and uninsured patients at Connecticut's largest network of community health centers.

While the Pew Center on the States gave Connecticut an A for its efforts in strengthening children's dental health in 2011, one of the benchmarks Connecticut did not meet was in authorizing new primary care dental providers.ⁱ There are several different approaches to addressing this recommendation by the Pew Center on the States, the National Academy for State Health Policy, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.ⁱⁱ Connecticut has an opportunity to join the initiative and bring the skills of the expanded function dental assistant to the many underserved patients in the state.

We applaud the direction of the General Assembly in ensuring continued progress toward access to dental services and improved outcomes of oral health for our residents.

Respectfully Submitted,

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ⁱ The State of Children's Dental Health: Making Coverage Matter – Connecticut

http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewcenteronthestatesorg/Initiatives/Childrens_Dental_Health/048_11_DENT_50_State_Factsheets_Connecticut_052311_web.pdf

ⁱⁱ Help Wanted: A Policy Maker's Guide to New Dental Providers.

http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/Dental_Report_Help_Wanted.pdf